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NEWS RELEASE

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Race to the Top funds support schools, teachers, students Governor, Education Commissioner release Year Two report on grant

In the two years since the U.S. Department of Education awarded Rhode Island a \$75-million Race to the Top grant, the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) has used the federal funds to develop and implement initiatives to accelerate schools toward greatness, to ensure educator excellence, and to support student achievement.

To inform Rhode Islanders about progress to date under the grant, Governor Lincoln D. Chafee and Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist today (August 20) released a Race to the Top Year Two Progress Update.

“As we near the midway point in our four-year Race to the Top grant, I am proud that we have invested these federal funds wisely to further improve the quality of education in Rhode Island,” said Governor Chafee. “The Year Two Progress Report that we are releasing today outlines some of our accomplishments to date under Race to the Top. Teachers, school leaders, and many friends of education across the state have worked hard over the past two years to ensure that our students are receiving the best possible education, and I am grateful for this commitment to our schools and to our young people.”

“Two years ago, the U.S. Department of Education recognized Rhode Island as a leading state in school reform and awarded us a \$75-million Race to the Top grant,” said George D. Caruolo, Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “In partnership with districts and schools across the state, the R.I. Department of Education has developed systems and launched initiatives to improve public education in Rhode Island. We will continue to focus our efforts on providing excellent public education for all students in Rhode Island.”

Using Race to the Top funds, over the past two years RIDE has:

- implemented educator evaluations in all schools and districts;
- launched a system (Educator Performance and Support System) that makes evaluation tools, guidance, and data accessible in one location;

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- begun an induction program for all new teachers;
- trained nearly 5,000 educators for transition to the new Common Core State Standards;
- developed virtual-learning instruction in mathematics to help struggling students; and
- provided support to help turn around low-achieving schools.

“Our Race to the Top grant has provided us with an unprecedented opportunity to support our teachers and school leaders, to build data systems that will improve teaching and learning, to help our schools achieve greatness, and to prepare our students for success,” said Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “Thanks to the dedication of our educators, our students, and their families, Rhode Island is leading the way, and I am confident that, working together, we can make our schools America’s best.”

New initiatives for Year Three of Race to the Top include opening the Academy for Transformative Leadership, which will prepare aspiring principals to take on leadership roles in our lowest-achieving schools, and launching an online system for educators (the Instructional Management System) that will bring together data on students, curriculum, assessments, and professional development.

Governor Chafee and Commissioner Gist released the Year Two Progress Update at the August meeting of the Race to the Top Steering Committee, a stakeholder committee that Commissioner Gist established to provide an independent perspective on the implementation of the Race to the Top grant.

To date, Rhode Island has used about \$16 million of the allocated Race to the Top funds; by the end of the second full year of the grant (September 30), Rhode Island will use a total of about \$28 million. Rhode Island is on track to use the full \$75-million allocation over the four-year term of the grant.

For more information and for a copy of the Year Two Progress Update, see:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/commissioner/RaceToTheTop/docs/Rhode%20Island%20Race%20to%20the%20Top%20Year%20Two%20Report.pdf>

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